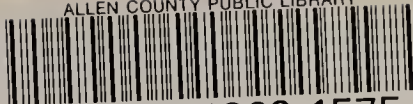


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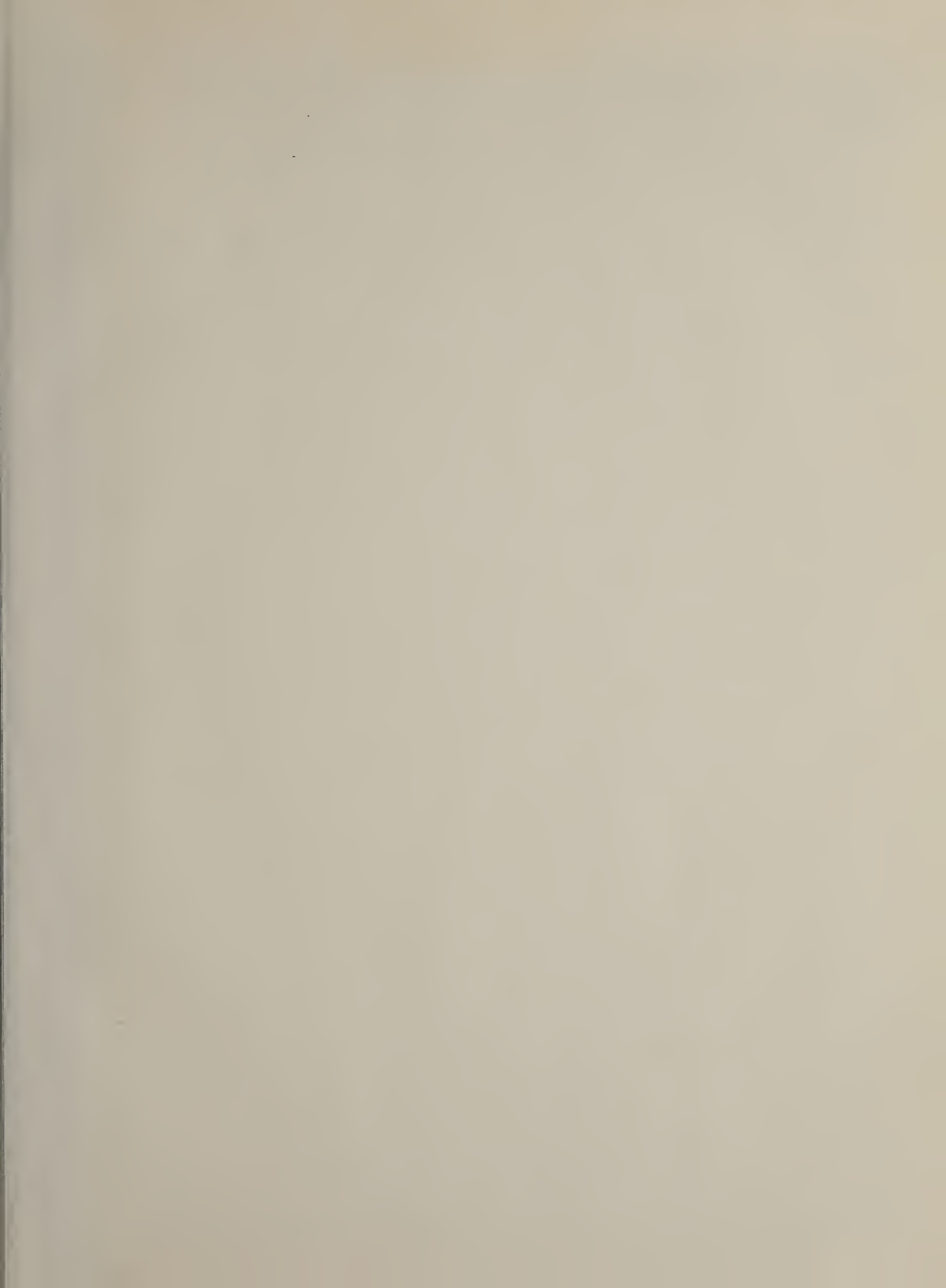
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THE HILL FAMILY OF FAYETTEVILLE

TYPICAL TEXIANS

Texas

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An address by

GEO. A. HILL, JR.
HOUSTON, TEXAS

DELIVERED AT FAYETTEVILLE, TEXAS, DECEMBER 9, 1936, UPON THE OCCASION
OF THE DEDICATION OF A MONUMENT ERECTED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS

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THE HILL FAMILY OF FAYETTEVILLE

TYPICAL TEXIANS

1923379

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Texians:

I am most profoundly grateful to you, the citizens of Fayetteville and of Fayette County, for the significant honor and the highly cherished privilege that you have conferred upon me in inviting me to address you upon the occasion of the dedication, by the State of Texas, of an enduring monument to the memory of the illustrious heroes of the Republic of Texas who resided in or near this historic community. This monument bears an inscription that shall ever preserve and awaken memories of gallant and courageous men and of romantic and historically decisive events, viz.:

"FAYETTEVILLE
STAGE STATION ON THE
OLD SAN FELIPE TRAIL
FOUNDED BY
JAMES J. ROSS, JOHN CRIER,
JAMES CUMMINS
MEMBERS OF AUSTIN'S FIRST COLONY
NEARBY RESIDED
WILLIAM J. RUSSELL
PARTICIPANT OF THE BATTLE OF VELASCO
JEROME B. ALEXANDER
FEDELIA BREEDING
JAMES MONROE HILL
VETERANS OF SAN JACINTO.
ANDREW CRIER
WM. HILL
DR. WM. P. SMITH
OF SAN JACINTO CAMPAIGN
ASA HILL
JEFFREY B. HILL
JOHN C. C. HILL
MEMBERS MIER EXPEDITION
ERECTED BY STATE OF TEXAS."

Indeed, the very names, Fayetteville and Fayette County, were implanted in this virgin soil to sow the permanent seeds, and to forever nurture the beneficent fruits derivative from the eternal principles of human liberty as exemplified in the life and the exploits of the intrepid, the chivalrous, and the valorous Marquis de la Fayette, whose inspired consecration to the cause of human liberty contributed vastly to the birth of the first American republic and to the success of the French

Revolution, and most appropriately, his declining years, spent in philosophical repose in his Castle of La Grange, have been preserved to human recall by many instances of the retention of the name Lagrange, in American community life.

No nobler son has ever sprung from this fruitful soil than our friend and neighbor, Houston Wade; and to him, and in your behalf, I record the reverential and affectionate debt of gratitude that we owe to him for the devoted patriotism, the tireless research and the patient and indefatigable labors that have been, by him, so conspicuously applied to the writing of the history of this community and of this county, its people and their happenings. His address at these dedicatory ceremonies will be a most valued and enlightening review of the history of this community and of those who founded it and made its history. Likewise do I fervently express a similar acknowledgment to Mr. L. W. Kemp of Houston, Texas, whose life has been devoted to the same unselfish and patriotic cause throughout every town and hamlet of this great State. It is deserved and appropriate that this Centennial celebration should begin with an expression of deep and thankful recognition.

The honor that you accord to me, upon this occasion, is due to the fact that the State of Texas has, by the erection of this monument, recorded in imperishable form the names of four members of my family, and it is because of your interest in the simple, as well as the unusual, annals of their typically Texian experiences that I now presume to review the events of their lives, and of the lives of the members of their families, as a typical example of the character and quality of the frontiersmen who wrought the destiny of the Republic of Texas.

Asa Hill was my great-grandfather, and to him the names of Fayetteville and La Grange were household words. He was born near Hillsboro in North Carolina, the son of Isaac Hill and Lucy Wallace Hill, and was one of ten children, having eight brothers and one sister. In North Carolina he lived at no great distance from Fayetteville, Cumberland County, and La Grange, in Lenoir County. The family moved to Georgia about the year 1800, and founded the little town of Hillsboro, which was not far distant from the town of Fayetteville in Fayette County, and La Grange in Troup County, and it was there that he met and married Elizabeth Barksdale.

Rec'd Mar 28-1947

Asa and Elizabeth Hill raised thirteen children, twelve of whom reached maturity, the first born, a son, having died in infancy. Their sons were:

Green Washington Hill;
William Carroll Andrew Jackson Hill;
Jeffrey Barksdale Hill;
James Monroe Hill;
Asa Collingsworth Hill;
John Christopher Columbus Hill.

Their daughters were:

Serena Pinckney Hill (Mrs. Geo. A. Kerr);
Susanna Amanda Hill (married Rev. C. W. Thomas);
Louisiana Elizabeth Hill (Mrs. William P. Kerr);
Mary Anne Rebecca Hill (Mrs. Peter B. Shaw);
Sarah Anne Amelia Hill (wife of General Wm. G. Webb);
Martha Anne Eliza Hill.

The parents of Asa and Elizabeth Hill were of good, hardy English and Scotch stock, and, although the children born of this marriage were numerous, this was not unusual, as the brothers of Asa Hill likewise had large and rugged families.

In 1834, my great-grandfather, Asa Hill, accompanied by one son, William Carroll Andrew Jackson Hill, and his nephew, Isaac Lafayette Hill, journeyed to Texas, and selected a place for settlement in Austin's colony near Gay Hill, and then returned to Georgia to arrange for the removal of his family to Texas. The return voyage commenced at Columbus, Georgia, by steamboat on the Chattahoochee River to the port of Appalachicola, where the party reembarked on a schooner for New Orleans, by way of Mobile. At the port of New Orleans, a sailing vessel was employed for crossing the Gulf of Mexico, and, after a voyage of eighteen days, they reached the little port of Matagorda on Matagorda Bay. Ox wagons furnished the vehicles for travel from Matagorda to San Felipe, which was then the seat of the provincial government, and thence on to Gay Hill, which journey occupied seven days of travel.

The clearing of land for farming, the erection of a dwelling house, and all of the preparations for farming and stock raising were progressing apace, when news by courier arrived of the siege of the Alamo. Asa Hill and his son, William Carroll Andrew Jackson Hill, at once joined an expedition for the relief of the garrison at the Alamo, but were unable to reach San Antonio before its fall. They did, however, witness on this expedition the burning of Gonzales.

During the absence of Asa Hill on this expedition my grandfather, James Monroe Hill, and his younger brothers and sisters were busily engaged in moulding and patching bullets for use in the reception of Santa Anna's army, reports of the invasion of which had spread throughout the length and breadth of the colony; and so immediately upon his return, Asa Hill and his son,

James Monroe Hill, and seven others, started in search of General Sam Houston, who had been empowered, upon the declaration of independence of the Republic of Texas on March 2, 1836, to raise an army of defense. Houston's trail was encountered at Burnam's Crossing on the Colorado River, and contact was soon made with a detachment of his army near Columbus who were guarding the ford of the river.

James Monroe Hill enlisted in Captain W. W. Hill's company at this point, and Asa Hill proceeded down the Colorado River to report to General Houston. He was detailed by General Houston to contact all families in the colony west of the Brazos and to warn them to hasten to cross the Brazos and fall behind the protecting cover of Houston's army, which was being organized for a strategic retreat before the approaching enemy under General Santa Anna.

The rest of this episode is familiar and notable history.

James Monroe Hill continued with Houston's army and was one of those of extreme youth who served valiantly in the battle that won for Texas its independence. In his later years he served as President of the San Jacinto Veterans' Association, was importantly instrumental in inducing the State of Texas to purchase the battlefield as a State memorial park, and served as the chairman of the commission appointed by Governor Culberson to locate and effectuate the purchase of the battlefield by the State of Texas. In this work he was ably assisted by my father, George A. Hill, Sr., who served as the secretary of the commission appointed by Governor Culberson for such purpose.

Prior to this time, my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, Hugh Kerr and Lucy Thomson Kerr, were residing near Cornersville, Tennessee. This town was near Fayetteville in the adjoining county of Lincoln and not far distant from the town of La Grange in Fayette County, Tennessee. Hugh Kerr was the son of Hugh Kerr, Sr., and was born in Sligo, Ireland, and Lucy Thomson was the daughter of Alexander Thomson, Sr. She was of Scotch, English and French descent, the last mentioned lineage being through John de la Fontaine, who settled in Virginia in 1716. Hugh Kerr was a friend of Andrew Jackson, and he and his wife, Lucy Thomson Kerr, had learned a great deal about Texas from Alexander Thomson, who was an assistant empresario of Sterling Robertson's colony, contemporaneously known as the Nashville Colony. In 1831, they decided to emigrate to Texas with those who were then surviving of their nine children, viz:

Mary Anne Lewis Kerr;
George Alexander Kerr;
Augustus Kerr;
William Penn Kerr;
Alfred Benjamin F. Kerr;
Jane Hallowell Kerr (Mrs. James Monroe Hill);
Amanda Julia Kerr (who married Rev. H. S. Thrall).

They embarked on a steamboat on the Tennessee River and followed it to its junction with the Mississippi River and proceeded thence to New Orleans, where they transhipped to a schooner, and finally disembarked at Harrisburg in the Fall of 1831. They were accompanied by Alexander Thomson, the brother of Lucy Thomson Kerr, and his family, and, in 1832, they each received grants in Austin's colony on the Cummings Creek in what is now Washington County.

The trials and vicissitudes of frontier life produced meager earnings, and Hugh Kerr accepted the position given him by Andrew Jackson as collector of customs at the port of New Orleans to supplement the income from farm and stock raising, and was in New Orleans in the momentous days of the Spring of 1836, when the young republic was experiencing its birth.

The Kerrs were devout Methodists, and Alexander Thomson was a lay preacher, and the first Methodist Sunday School held in the province of Texas is reputed (page 70 of "Texas Colonists and Religion, 1821-1836" by Wm. Stuart Red) to have been held at Kerr's settlement in the home of my great grandmother, Lucy Thomson Kerr, with Alexander Thomson officiating. In the Texas Christian Advocate of Jan. 16, 1908, there is an account of the proceedings of the Texas Conference Missionary Society held at Rutersville on December 28, 1840, and the journal records the presence of 13 members of the Hill family, 8 of the Kerr family and 10 of the Thomson family out of less than 100 in attendance at this historic gathering.

Both Crockett and Travis spent one night in the Kerr home when on their way to San Antonio, but the Kerr family had to flee soon thereafter behind the retreating army of General Houston with an innumerable host of women and children in the great hegira known in that day as "The Runaway Scrape."

After the victory at San Jacinto, the Hill and the Kerr families returned to more normal pursuits, but Indian depredations made life on this frontier a matter of constantly recurring hazards. Unorganized as well as organized Indian warfare was a matter of great frequency.

One of the great problems in the daily life of my great-grandparents and of others resident in this community was the continuance of the appropriate education of their children, and therefore they welcomed and supported the Rutersville College, which was organized near by in honor of the Reverend Martin Ruter, one of the first Methodist missionaries who had been sent to Texas. Through the energetic zeal of Reverend Chauncey Richardson, a charter was obtained for Rutersville College from the Republic of Texas, with a donation by the Congress of the Republic of four leagues of land for the benefit of the college. The Reverend Chauncey Richardson became its first president. It is very interesting to me to note that the roster of this college, for its first term, included the following children of Asa and Elizabeth Hill, viz.:

Monroe Hill (James Monroe Hill);
Asa Collingsworth Hill;
John C. Hill;
Sarah Anne Hill;
Mary Anne Rebecca Hill;
Martha Anne Eliza Hill;
Susanna Amanda Hill;
Louisiana Elizabeth Hill;

and also, a little Mexican fifer boy captured at San Jacinto by my grandfather, James Monroe Hill, and whose name was Joseph Mendes. This little Mexican boy was offered the option of returning to Mexico, but he expressed a decided preference for remaining in Texas, and he lived with and was educated by Asa and Elizabeth Hill.

My great-grandparents, Hugh and Lucy Kerr, also had, in the first enrollment in Rutersville College, the following children:

Jane H. Kerr (afterwards, Mrs. James Monroe Hill);
Mary J. A. Kerr;
George Kerr;

and also their cousins,

J. N. McD. Thomson; and
Susan C. Thomson,

children of Alexander Thomson.

J. N. McD. Thomson was a member of the ill-fated Mier Expedition in 1842, of whom more will be recounted later.

The enrollment of Rutersville College for the year 1840 was reproduced in the Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association in October 1898, in Volume 11, Number 2, on pages 124-125, and the catalogue and enrollment for the year 1841 is photostatically reproduced on pages 46-47 of the Texas Methodist Centennial Year Book, (1834-1934) together with photographs of the old college building during the period that it was Rutersville College, and later when it became the Texas Military Institute.

I now possess, and have read with great interest, a copy of the diary of my great-uncle, the Reverend A. B. F. Kerr, during the period of time when he was acting as agent for Rutersville College in 1849-52, and this daily journal of his travels as circuit rider and agent for the college is intensely interesting. He began the journal with this inscription:

"This book is to register my daily deeds and actions. O! May I not do anything of which I would be ashamed to record.

"As yet, I have accomplished but little; may the Lord direct and guide me successfully for Christ's sake.

A. B. F. KERR."

During the early days of the republic, my great-grandfather, Hugh Kerr, wrote and published in New York in 1838, an historical poem (which I have recently had reprinted and bound in its identical original form) the

content and subject matter of which is revealed in its title and sub-title, which I quote to you:

"A
POETICAL DESCRIPTION
OF
TEXAS,
AND
NARRATIVE OF MANY INTERESTING EVENTS IN
THAT COUNTRY, EMBRACING A PERIOD
OF SEVERAL YEARS, INTERSPERS-
ED WITH MORAL AND POLI-
TICAL IMPRESSIONS,
ALSO, AN
APPEAL TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE UNION OF
TEXAS WITH THE UNITED STATES,
AND THE ANTICIPATION OF
THAT EVENT,
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE TEXAS HEROES, NO. 1 AND 2.

BY HUGH KERR

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR
1838."

It is a revealing record of the times, and primarily valuable as an illustration of the fervent desire for annexation of the young republic to the United States of America, and its prophecy of the strife and discord that would surely ensue from the failure to permanently dispose of the slavery issue.

In February, 1839, Colonel John H. Moore, in an engagement with the Comanche Indians on the San Saba River, had suffered a serious repulse, and in August, 1840, the Comanches had made a serious invasion of the peaceful settlements. Stern necessity required that this Comanche menace be removed and destroyed, and therefore Colonel Moore, with two companies of volunteers, captained by Thomas J. Rabb and Nicholas M. Dawson of Fayette County, undertook an expedition far up the Colorado River to effectively suppress the savages. My grandfather, James Monroe Hill, became one of these volunteers and participated throughout this Indian campaign. A Comanche village near Colorado City was made the subject of a surprise attack, and one hundred and thirty Indians were killed in this engagement, without any fatalities upon the part of Moore's command, although a number were wounded. This proved to be a most decisive campaign and avenged the former Comanche massacre at Lynaville.

In 1812, during the second administration of General Sam Houston as President of the Republic of Texas, the republic was invaded by a Mexican army under General Woll, which resulted in the capture and occupation of San Antonio. President Houston authorized the enlistment of an army to repel the invasion, under the command of General Somervell, and a number of volun-

teers from Fayette County hastened to the points of mobilization, including in their number my great-grandfather, Asa Hill, and two of his sons, Jeffrey B. Hill and John Christopher Columbus Hill, the latter a small boy of fourteen years of age. The expedition proceeded overland, suffering every kind of hardship, to the little border town of Laredo, and thence down the Rio Grande River opposite the little Mexican village of Mier. A number of this expeditionary force, under General Somervell, withdrew at this point, in the face of a Mexican army under the command of General Ampudia, but those remaining, who numbered less than three hundred, were determined to occupy the town of Mier and conquer the tremendously superior forces arrayed against them; and these were commanded by William S. Fisher and Thomas J. Green. The town was occupied by the Texians and there was a bitter engagement throughout the 25th and 26th days of December, 1842, which finally resulted in the capitulation of the Texians under the terms of a truce.

In this engagement the Texians exhibited great heroism, but none more so than the little boy, John Christopher Columbus Hill. His conduct in this battle, and the subsequent chapters of his romantic life, have been preserved to Texas history in "The Boy Captive," written by Mrs. Iglehart, and in "Recollections of Mexico," by J. Waddy Thompson, the American ambassador, and in various other historical works. The brilliant historical pageant, "Cavalcade," of the Texas Centennial Celebration at Dallas prominently features this episode. One of the members of this expedition, William Preston Stapp, kept a journal, which was published in Philadelphia in 1845 under the title: "The Prisoners of Perote," and in this journal, on page 83, he recalls having met little John Hill at Matamoros, en route to Mexico City, and described him thus:

"Little John Hill, thirteen years old, a brave and handsome little fellow, was afterwards liberated by Santa Anna, who has since charged himself with his education and has him now at school in Mexico. Through the partiality he is said to enjoy with the usurper, his brother and father (who likewise belonged to the expedition) were successively released and money provided them with which to reach home. He frequently visited us in our confinement, expressing the keenest solicitude for our welfare and the most earnest hopes of our speedy deliverance. This was the boy whom the newspaper accounts of the Battle of Mier represent to have killed seventeen Mexicans. He behaved with the gallantry of a veteran throughout that bloody fight, and we daresay, from the deliberation and the frequency of his shots, must have added largely to the enemy's loss."

It will be recalled that the Mier prisoners were marched overland to the Rancho Salado below Saltillo, where a general escape was attempted, in punishment for which the recaptured prisoners had to submit to the famous drawing of the beans. One hundred and seventy-six beans were placed under a crock, amongst which were 159 white and seventeen black beans. As each prisoner drew a bean therefrom, each one having drawn a black bean was condemned to death by musketry. Asa Hill drew a white bean, but J. N. McD. Thomson, drew a black bean and was, at the hour of twilight, shot to death by musketry.

before an adobe wall with sixteen other companions. Jeffrey Hill, who was wounded, was then at Matamoros under guard.

Meanwhile, John C. C. Hill was sent on to Mexico City by his admiring captor, General Pedro Ampudia, under special escort and presented to General Santa Anna, who was again the President of the Republic of Mexico, and both General Santa Anna and his wife became attached to this diminutive and courageous little Texian. At an audience with Santa Anna granted to him, there were present General Jose Maria Tornel, Secretary of War, and President of the School of Mines of Mexico City (the Minería), and General Gomez Farias, who was the Commandant of the Military Academy at Chapultepec. John Hill had declined Santa Anna's importunity that he consent to adoption, but was at this audience given the choice of being enrolled in the School of Mines under General Tornel or in the Military Academy under General Farias. He selected the School of Mines and had a brilliant career therein, subsequently graduating and becoming one of its professors. After the Mier prisoners, including his father and brother, had reached Mexico City and were sent for imprisonment to the Castle of Perote, he consented to adoption by General and Senora Santa Anna, conditioned upon the parole of his father and brother and a boyhood playmate, Harvey Sellers, who was one of the Mier prisoners. Shortly thereafter, Santa Anna's abdication as President of Mexico occurred, and John Hill became a member of the family of General Tornel, who was a distinguished and cultivated Mexican soldier, statesman and historian, and whose paternal affection and solicitude for him continued throughout the remainder of his long and useful life in the Republic of Mexico.

One of the happiest experiences of my life was upon the occasion of my visit during the past Summer in the City of Mexico to the distinguished lawyer, Luis Tornel, the grandson of General Jose Maria Tornel, to renew the expressions of my family's abiding appreciation to General Tornel and his family for their excessive kindness to that valorous and captivating little expatriate, John Christopher Columbus Hill, whom the fortunes of war had thrust into their midst and who was received by the Tornel family in generous and affectionate custody and as one of their very own.

Even as Asa Hill had taken into his own home and educated at Rutgersville College the little Mexican fifer *Joao* Joseph Mendes, captured by my grandfather (also a young boy) at the Battle of San Jacinto, even so did fate decree that his own son, John C. C. Hill, as a captive of the Mexicans, should receive the kindness and paternal care of General Santa Anna and General Tornel and have the advantages of an education in the famous School of Mines in Mexico City, thereby procuring the release and parole of his father and brother, Asa and Jeffrey Hill, from the dungeons of Perote Prison.

Another interesting eventuality in later years was the

instance afforded to John C. C. Hill to repay the kindness to him of General Ampudia, who had sent him on to Mexico City from the town of Mier under special escort and with glowing accounts of his bravery.

At the time of the fall of the Empire of Maximilian and Carlotta in 1867, General Pedro Ampudia and his brother were adherents of the Empire and were imprisoned and awaiting execution. John Hill, who at the time enjoyed the friendship and the confidence of President Benito Juarez, interceded in their behalf and procured their pardon and release. It so happened that, upon this occasion, John Hill was being visited in Mexico City by his brother, Asa Collingsworth Hill, who later returned to Fayetteville to my grandfather's home with an account of this extraordinary experience.

On September 14, 1843, James Monroe Hill married Jane Hallowell Kerr near the little town of Burton, and thereafter lived near Fayetteville for the next forty-one years, before removing to Austin, and here it was at the family homestead that my own father was born on March 23, 1853, and all of his brothers and sisters:

James Leonidas Hill (December 21, 1844);
John William Hill (March 31, 1847);
Homer Barksdale Hill (January 3, 1851);
George Alfred Hill (March 23, 1853);
Lucy Amanda Hill (March 25, 1855);
Mary Elizabeth Hill (August 27, 1858);
Iola Jane Hill (October 7, 1860);
Frank Webb Hill (October 16, 1862);
Nola Hill (November 22, 1867).

The Hills and the Kerrs thereafter lived the normal life of this frontier community during the years that followed, following various vocations, viz.: Farming, stock raising, the ministry, as doctors and cotton merchants, and other honorable vocations. The simple records of the county exhibit their peaceful and useful history as staunch members of the Methodist Church, as members of the Masonic Order, as landowners, voters and taxpayers, and only the recurring wars seemed to interrupt the serenity of their lives in this beautiful, peaceful and fruitful land.

In the war between the United States and Mexico, my great-uncle, Asa Collingsworth Hill, commanded a spy company on the border, and in the war between the States, James Monroe Hill and his two eldest sons, Leonidas ~~Edwin~~ Hill and John W. Hill, served in the Confederate army.

In the battle of San Jacinto there was also engaged the first cousin of James Monroe Hill—Isaac Lafayette Hill, whose name is inscribed upon the monument erected by the State of Texas at Round Top, and who had a distinguished career in the later period of our State's history. He was a brother of Benjamin Harvey Hill, Georgia's greatest statesman (and a boyhood schoolmate of James Monroe Hill in Hillsboro, Georgia) who served in the Senate of the Confederacy and in the Senate of

the United States during the Tragic Era of reconstruction following the war between the States. Senator Hill first opposed secession, but, after the event, became its ardent champion. Similarly Isaac Lafayette Hill presided over the meeting of Texas Democrats gathered on the site of the San Jacinto Battlefield on April 21, 1860 (two days before the meeting of the National Democratic Convention at Charleston, South Carolina, on April 23, 1860) and the Texas Democrats at this convention presented the name of Sam Houston (who also opposed secession) to the country as "the people's candidate for the presidency." Resolutions were adopted at the battlefield convention looking toward the preservation of the Union and opposing matters creating internal discord. It is here interesting to recall that the government of the Confederacy established, in its judicial system, two Federal judicial districts in Texas, and another brother, and distinguished lawyer, William Pinckney Hill, was appointed to this Federal Judgeship

of the Confederacy by President Jefferson Davis.

In the years that have followed, all of these kinsmen have married and have reared families, until now the descendants of those who have been so signally honored by the erection and the dedication of this monument by the State of Texas, and by the good people of Fayetteville and Fayette County, are legion.

In their behalf, I return to what to me is sacred soil: the place of the birth and the boyhood of my Father; the place where my grandfather and grandmother were blessed with a happy union and rewarded with the good and beneficent yield and experiences of long and useful lives; and where my great-grandparents, by their own selection, achieved the haven of their mortal desires.

To each and all of the innumerable and far-flung Hill clan the name of Fayetteville is charmed and treasured, and is a symbol of enduring gratitude to, and solicitous interest in, this community, its traditions, its institutions, and its inhabitants.

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Houston

